

DE LA FONS' PATENT ROTARY LOCKS.

We have recently examined with much care, and considerable pleasure, an ingenious and elegant rotary lock, invented by Mr. De la Fons, and manufactured for sale by Barlow, of Long Acre. The principle of the rotary bolt is applied not only to locks, but also to latches, fasteners for carriage doors, casements, and, indeed, to almost every description of fastening.

Amongst the advantages which Mr. De la Fons' lock appears to possess are, first, the impossibility of ever reaching the defences of the lock by any of the usual means, as all access to the interior is closed before the action of the key commences; secondly, whereas access to drawers, in particular, is frequently gained without the aid of a key, by springing the wood, without unlocking, or by forcing back the bolt with a knife or other instrument, this is most effectually prevented, the bolt being linked into the opposite frame of the drawer, and can only be separated by unlocking; thirdly, in all locks hitherto constructed, the bolt seldom has more than a quarter of an inch to move, while the patent bolt in traversing has to pass through several times that distance before it is released; and, fourthly, the usual means resorted to for defeating intricate and expensive locks, is by forcing away all impediments with a solid powerful key. This hitherto great defect is rendered impracticable by means of a peculiarly novel contrivance, so that if any attempt of the kind be made, the interior of the lock yields to extra force, and suffers the key to pass completely round without damaging or deranging the lock in the slightest degree.

In the best of the locks, the means of making several thousand changes in the wards are ingeniously provided, and of altering the key to accord with them; so that if a key be lost, others being in hand, the possibility of its passing may be immediately prevented, and the lock become to all intents and purposes, a new one.

The sash-fastening has the advantage of securing sashes against rattling; and the casement latch appears to us a particularly nice arrangement.

FULHAM UNION WORKHOUSE COMPETITION.

We have received a letter from Mr. A. Gilbert, of Blackheath, claiming the authorship of the prize plan, and begging "to contradict the whole of the statement" which appeared in our paper of the 6th inst., with reference to this competition. We are sufficiently alive to the importance of giving correct information, and would not risk the character of this journal by the insertion of anything of the verity of which we are not well assured. In this case we have made further inquiries; and the result, we regret to say, not only confirms the truth of our previous remarks in every respect, but adds facts further proving the confusion of the attempted adaptation. Our observations were definite and distinct, and the accuracy of most of them may be easily proved by any member of the Board who doubts it and will bestow the requisite trouble. Our authority for the statement that the design was made by the master of the Greenwich Union is that person himself, who states it publicly to strangers: if it be untrue, the sooner he is made to unsay it the better; if true, the architect of the building copied should bestir himself, to prevent a repetition of the circumstance: this is a proceeding which really concerns all architects.

We are sorry for Mr. A. Gilbert's unqualified contradiction, because it compels us to remind him of his recorded admission at the board, that he had not prepared any sections, or a block plan; and he knows he has increased (by figuring) many of his main walls, at the suggestion of the surveyor of the Poor Law Commission (from one brick), and has now again to do so, at the instance of the official referees; the want of the necessary specified accommodations, and the wrong drainage, are notorious, while the copyism has been proved before the board, by comparison with the published plans of Greenwich. The guardians still say, that they have made no decision, and yet the author has been permitted extensively to alter his plans, to send them to

the authorities, and to profit largely by the hints of others. We could add other startling facts, shewing the serious error committed by the guardians, but abstain, because we believe them to be very honourable men, and that the error is the result of the want of proper advice alone. It seems our article helped to open their eyes at the last meeting of the board, and led to an attempt to elicit the truth, by appointing an independent architect to report on the plans. On this point, however, the board were equally divided, and it stands adjourned.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE EARLY HISTORY OF ARCHITECTURE—FROM ANCIENT MANUSCRIPTS.

THE study of ancient MSS., in their pictorial and decorative remains, has gradually established for itself an importance often higher than that which belongs to an attentive consideration of objects far better known, and of much greater pretension. Besides Strutt, a host of modern writers of less celebrity, have proved to what an extent the development of historical costume is indebted to the preservation of these dazzling records, while the recent publication of innumerable fac-similes from various examples elicits the fact that they are of no ordinary value to the decorator, who, in the composition of his designs, may thus turn to the borders of illuminated books for assistance, finding there the most perfect harmony of colour, the purest combination of ornamental forms, and a choice of subjects both from the animal and vegetable kingdoms of the greatest propriety for the purposes of his art. The habits, ceremonies, and progress of civilization among our ancestors they also serve beautifully to explain; and in a department peculiarly interesting to the readers of *THE BUILDER*, Mr. Wright has strung together a series of copies, shewing the modes of building which were practised at particular intervals during the middle ages.* But no collection has hitherto been made presenting such architectural details, chronologically arranged, as frequently form the backgrounds of miniatures in ancient MSS. This deficiency it is the object of the accompanying engravings partly to fill up. They have been carefully selected, generally from those books preserved in the library of the British Museum, which may be regarded as favourable specimens of the art of each epoch which they serve to elucidate, and it will be noticed that nearly all of them exhibit features somewhat different from those possessed by cotemporary architectural remains. When we consider the accuracy which characterised the mediæval pencil in depicting events, costumes, &c., it may at first sight appear difficult to account for this circumstance. It may therefore be necessary to remark that, as in the middle ages, that propriety which regulated the designs for every species of decoration was never intruded upon,—as the glass-stainer never executed ornaments which would be entirely suitable for the purposes of sculpture,—nor the aurifer subjects which might be copied for monumental brasses,—so the borders, majuscules, and paintings which tended to make volumes from the 7th to the 15th century so exquisitely beautiful, were of a style peculiar to themselves; and even when architectural details were introduced into a miniature, they assumed a character which approached only to a certain extent, that of the edifices which at the same period inexhausted enthusiasm succeeded in constructing. But with all the peculiarity and isolation of MS. architecture, we are certainly able to perceive in every example of it the influence of cotemporary taste, to trace the lingering remains of Roman feeling in many Anglo-Saxon productions merge into a style of which disproportionate capitals and a multiplicity of arches were the chief characteristics; the bold Norman gradually give place to the elegant Early English; and the latter as soon followed by the crocketed pinnacles of the decorated, and the elaborate tracery of the perpendicular.

The first example (fig. 1) we have represented in elucidation is taken from one of the capitals supporting arches, which surmount the Eusebian canons at the beginning of the famous volume known as the Durham book. It is one of the few MSS. preserved, exhibit-

ing native talent, uninfluenced in any degree by Roman intercourse: for it is a remarkable fact that the Romans, though possessing the entire domination of our island for several centuries, regarded its humble occupants in so distant a light, that the latter, for a considerable time, practised their own arts and habits with very little adulteration. This horizontal square-edged capital is not unfrequently met with in churches, which there is good authority for believing to be in part Anglo-Saxon, those of Brixworth and Repton especially presenting it, but of course without any attempt at sculptured enrichment. The artist, in the instance before us, has taken a form not unusual in the architecture of his time, and decorated it according to his fancy and the requirements of his art.

Our second example (fig. 2) represents three capitals from the Gospels of Athelstan, a book written about A.D. 930, and upon which the Kings of England were wont formerly to take the coronation oath. These capitals are in the original richly decorated with gold, silver, black, lilac, and vermilion, a mode of embellishment which may possibly have been adopted in the interiors of Anglo-Saxon churches and dwellings. The principal feature in the design of the present specimens is the introduction of foliage which had not made its appearance in the illumination of MSS. when the Durham book was executed. This may be attributed to the increase of refinement, and consequent study of Roman art about the 8th or 9th century.

(Fig. 3) is taken from a beautiful Greek manuscript of the 10th century. In the Burney collection. The chair occupied by St. Matthew, and the tower at the back of St. Luke, executed partly in body colour upon gold grounds, have been selected as pleasing instances of the singular architectural taste of an age and country but little understood.

At the end of the same or the beginning of the following century, a work emanated from Hyde Abbey, which may be regarded as a rich store-house of information respecting Anglo-Saxon manners and customs. Its architectural illustrations are worthy of minute investigation. Two of them we have engraved (fig. 3) as more than ordinarily interesting. The first represents, in all probability, the gate of Paradise, and is an elaborate composition, combining nearly all the peculiarities of style in its mouldings and ornamentation. The pyramidal tiled roof, with overhanging eaves depicted in this drawing and many others coeval in point of date, shews the incipient longing after a spire which only much later may be said to have attained perfection. The foliage, wherever introduced, is eminently classical in character and borrowed from the Romans, while the mouldings offer the pellet, the zigzag and others, explaining the source whence the Normans derived their subsequent adaptations of these ideas. In the tall shafts supporting the roof we recognise excepting that they are more enriched the narrow pilaster ribs, so intimately associated with Anglo-Saxon masonry, and so well defined on the tower of Barnack Church, Northamptonshire. Our second illustration from the same volume, represents a column, with disproportionately large capital and base. The height of the shaft alone is 10 diameters. The capital itself in the form of its mouldings, however remarkable, may be compared with the Anglo-Saxon impost at St. Benet's, Cambridge, while the disproportion between capital and shaft, displays itself more strikingly at Barnack and Corhampton. Thus we have good evidence for believing that these early drawings are in their broad masses to be depended upon, as correct types of Anglo-Saxon architecture, but that in all instances an ideal enrichment has been imparted to the details consistent with the taste of the period, but beyond what it was competent to effect.* In the

* In "Mosses' principles of Gothic Ecclesiastical Architecture," a valuable compendium, to which will be found engravings of several existing Anglo-Saxon details, to which we have referred in the course of our observations, occurs an acknowledgment of the extreme value of illustrated MSS. as throwing abundant light upon the study of ancient architecture. The author appears sensibly alive to their importance, particularly with regard to the Anglo-Saxon period, remarking that "if the illustrated MSS. of a date prior to the middle of the eleventh century, preserved in our various collections, cathedrals, as well as our public libraries, could be carefully examined, and tracings of the architectural details taken from the drawings there contained, much light might be thrown on this interesting branch of research."